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Captives en tragédie: la captivité au féminin sur les scènes antiques et modernes.

By ISABEL DEJARDIN. Saint-Genouph: Librairie Nizet. 2008. 318 pp. €34. ISBN 978-2-7078-1304-6.

This study by Dejardin aims to establish whether 'la captive' can be considered a tragic "type". To do so she examines the character of the captive in ancient and modern tragedy in order to identify fixed characteristics that would point to the paradigmatic value of this character. The corpus of early Modern texts is relatively small and ends in 1650, although references are made to Racine's *Phèdre*.

The inclusion of Dryden may seem odd at first but constitutes a valid attempt to test the theories advanced beyond the confines of the French stage and to establish whether the figure of the captive can be perceived as possessing qualities that would make it a universal type rather than one limited to a narrow national scope, especially since, as noted by the author, 'la situation tardive de son théâtre par rapport à la production tragique française explique autant le croisement des héritages dans son œuvre que la distance critique que le dramaturge adopte à leur égard.' (p. 38)

The bibliography is rather short and readers will find references to the usual suspects (Antonin Artaud, Roland Barthes, Georges Forestier, Marc Fumaroli, René Girard, Jean-Pierre Vernant) but this reflects the author's personal engagement with the primary material and her desire to examine her subject from multiple perspectives. This is not a survey of the evolution of critical perception of an recognized tragic type but a meticulous analysis of the features which lend the figure of the captive a specific dramatic function and underlines 'la modernité du genre tragique'. The author obviously envisages the problem from a dramatic and poetic perspective but does not neglect the importance of performance, which occupies the last third of the analysis.

Throughout, the study is rich with close analysis of the texts and presents the figure of the captive as a character which is always in a state of instability, whether in its own identity or in its purpose. The chapter on 'perspectives symboliques' perhaps exemplifies this best when it examines the metaphoric dimension. The constant cross referencing between ancient and modern texts highlights both the lasting nature of this instability and the subtle evolutions that have occurred to enable the captives to become a regular feature of the tragic action whilst setting them apart from characters which more clearly reflect contemporary preoccupations.

The conclusion underlines both the marginality of the character within the tragic world and the paradoxes that seem inherent to it but despite highlighting the consistency of the qualities that define it, it hesitates to validate the initial thesis and define it as a tragic type. This indeed reflects the problematic nature of the character, as fully demonstrated in the previous chapters, and does not in any way take away from the interest and validity of the theories explored throughout this study.

One small reservation is that Anglophone readers may be disappointed to find that, despite including Dryden and critical work in English on this specific playwright in her corpus, the rest of the critical background to this study is almost exclusively French (Butler, Lough and Knight are exceptions) and makes very little reference to more recent work being done in the UK and the US.

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